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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: DUMA FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHAIRMAN WARNS START
RATIFICATION NOT AUTOMATIC

Classified By: Ambassador John Beyrle for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) In a December 7 meeting with Ambassador Beyrle, Duma Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Konstantin Kosachev claimed that an "unequal" START follow-on treaty would expose President Medvedev to criticism from deputies from the Communist Party (KPRF), many of whom have direct expertise in arms control issues given their military backgrounds or as "red directors" in the defense sector. As an example, he cited Communist deputy Yuli Kvitsinskiy, a renowned Soviet arms negotiator from the 1980s. Such deputies, Kosachev said, do not trust America and will be very tough on the treaty.

¶2. (C) The Duma, Kosachev continued, can in many cases be considered to be "in the pocket" of the Medvedev-Putin leadership, given the strength in parliament of the United Russia party. But on this issue, he said, "it's not like that. If the text is not equal, then it will be easy to whip up opposition." For this reason, he said, Medvedev and the Russian negotiating team need to be hard-nosed in the discussions on remaining issues such as telemetry and verification. The Ambassador reaffirmed that the U.S. wants this treaty to serve as a stepping stone to additional arms control agreements on fissile material and testing and that we are interested in serious cooperation on developing missile defense. At the same time, the U.S. side is also facing congressional pressure and therefore is insistent on maintaining the successful transparency and verification mechanisms of the earlier treaty.

¶3. (C) Asked about Putin's role in the negotiations, Kosachev said he is informed about the developments and he offers his observations, but the final decisions rest with Medvedev. In addition to making the decisions, he added, Medvedev takes final responsibility.

¶4. (C) On the ratification timetable, Kosachev said the Duma would like to synchronize its action as much as possible with the U.S. Senate and he intends to remain in close contact with the Senate and with his counterparts on HFAC as the treaty is being considered in both capitals. He also noted that, before introduction in the Duma, treaties must undergo a time-consuming legal review by the Justice Ministry, a process that takes a minimum of three months, even with the Russian president expediting the work. He welcomed the offer by A/S Gottemoeller to visit Moscow in the coming months to answer deputies' questions about the treaty.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Kosachev is an experienced operator who recently met with the negotiating teams in Geneva; he understands the Washington legislative process well and recognizes the

scrutiny any treaty will be subject to in the Senate. His comments about difficulties in the Duma, therefore, were probably mainly intended to create a perception of meaningful legislative pressure in order to justify tough Russian negotiating positions. The GOR, in fact, establishes its positions without reference to views in the Duma because, despite what Kosachev may claim, ratification is not in doubt. KPRF opposition is certainly a possibility, but its virulence will be determined more by internal politics than by the content of the treaty.

Beyrle